



Beverly Hungry Wolf

“

Prejudice and lack of understanding among differing people and differing generations are the greatest challenges in trying to bridge my tribal culture with others. The problem exists on both sides. Through my work and writings I hope I'm contributing to a very slow improvement.

— Children of the Sun

”



Biography

Beverly Hungry Wolf was born on April 1, 1950 in Cardston, Alberta, Canada. Daughter of Edward (an artist) and Ruth (Beebe) Little Bear, Hungry Wolf is a member of the Blood tribe of the Blackfoot people. She was born in the Blood Indian Hospital and raised on the Blood Indian reserve (reservation), which is the largest Indian reserve in Canada. She grew up among relatives who were very proud of their heritage. Their ways flowed thick with tradition. Since she was exposed to and constantly bombarded with the Blackfoot culture during her youth, she spent most of her childhood learning about culture and speaking the Blackfoot language. In fact, she didn't learn how to speak English until she went to the boarding school on the reserve. She didn't stop at English; she also learned the modern way of life, just like the other Bloods of her generation.

Quick Facts

- * Born in 1950
- * Native American writer
- * Writes books about traditional Native American culture, especially that of the Blackfoot tribe

This page was researched and submitted by Brett Herolt, John W. Ostman, and Vanessa Touset on 3/14/97.

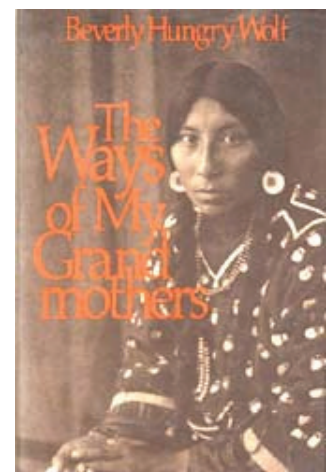


Beverly Hungry Wolf

Biography continued

After boarding school, she went to college, traveled a good bit, and then returned to eventually teach at the same boarding school that she had attended. From 1970-71, she taught at St. Mary's Indian School, Blood Reserve in Alberta and then she made an important decision in her life: to set out and find meaning to her ancestry. She decided to return to the traditional ways of her childhood, and to learn the traditional rituals and practices of everyday Indian life. She wanted to keep "the old ways" alive for her children and grandchildren and for their children and grandchildren. It was during this time that she met Adolph, a German/American writer who was trying to be accepted into the Blackfoot tribe. He was eventually accepted into the tribe and given the last name "Hungry Wolf." In October, 1971, they were married and they had four sons: Adolf, Jr., Shane, Okan, and Iniskim, and one daughter whom they named, "Star." They now live in a cabin on a piece of secluded wilderness in the British Columbian Rockies. Both Beverly and Adolf agree that they will allow their children to make their own choices, but they will give their children guidance the Blackfoot way. They live without a telephone or electricity. This is an excellent example of her practice of a basic lifestyle in nature. She once told *Contemporary Authors*, "I am actively involved in the traditional culture of the Blackfoot tribe, and I am trying to bridge the culture of our tribe and those of neighboring people of all races" (*Contemporary Authors*, vol.144).

In *The Ways of My Grandmothers*, Beverly accounts for her tribe's unique domestic skills, tribal history, and ancient ways. The book is compiled with a number of stories which she had collected from her mother, grandmother, and other influential women in the Blackfoot Indian reserve. She states that "By tribal custom, all the old women of the past are my grandmothers." The rare photographs in this book are extremely varied. Some of the photos came from family albums, museums, foundations, and secondhand and antique stores. Her thanks for encouragement are sent to her husband, and to a special grant, which, it should be noted, was given to her by the Canada council. A writer for the *New York Times Book Review* calls the book "a rare record of the American Indian heritage."





Beverly Hungry Wolf

Biography continued

Adolf had always been interested in, and respected, the ways of the Blackfoot people. It was his desire to learn and understand all that he possibly could about this Indian tribe that made for a smooth transition from the modern world to theirs. He had a lot to do with the research and motivation for the book *Shadows of the Buffalo*, which tells of the stories of the true warriors who were Beverly's ancestors. Many parallels can be drawn between this book and *Night Flying Woman*, by Ignatia Broker. They both discuss the differences between the life of the "white man" and that of the Native Americans and the different choices that they had to make. In *Shadows of the Buffalo*, Beverly discusses the constant thought process that is used to tell the difference between right and wrong. She also goes into great detail about Indian religion and beliefs in supreme beings. Her experience at the Catholic school that she attended when she was younger proved to be an excellent tool for her to relate the many similarities and disparities between the two religions. One intriguing difference is the fact that the Indians have religious ceremonies because they choose and want to perform them. Whites practice religious ceremonies because they are afraid of what might happen if they do not perform them. *Shadows of the Buffalo* is a true account of an actual Blackfoot family in an actual Blackfoot tribe trying to hold on to the traditions of old, while also attempting to blend in with the new.

In collecting the stories for *Children of the Sun: Stories by and About Indian Kids*, Beverly Hungry Wolf, along with her husband, Adolf, recorded many of the stories that were and are traditionally still today told to Native American children from a variety of tribes. Their purpose for writing this book was to preserve the tradition of story telling, and to enlighten its readers with the customs of many different Native American tribes. Their aim is not only to pass on folklore, but to educate the people who read these stories on the traditions of our (human beings in general) ancestors.

This book is not only for Native Americans, though the younger generation of Native Americans are the main target audience, but for anyone who is interested in folklore and ancient traditions. The authors target the younger Indian generation in hopes of reminding them of their past heritage and re-instilling the pride that used to go along with being a Native American. They are also trying to get a clear message out to the general public. The message is to do things together as a family. By going camping or doing some sort of project in your backyard or even inside your house as a family you can only strengthen the bonds that exist in your family. The family structure was obviously very important to the "old" generation of Indians. If that importance has been forgotten, this book was written as a reminder to the tribes and individual Native American families of today, as well as a reference for other families in other societies in this troubled world. After all, we are all children under the same sun.



Beverly Hungry Wolf

Biography continued

The book's title says it all; this book is a collection of traditional Indian stories for children, though it makes for very good reading for adults as well. The stories cover such difficult topics as child birth, growing up, finding a mate and the importance of ceremonies. Other topics include naming traditions, why turkeys are bald, marriage customs, and many more. All of the stories are easy to read and are written in such a natural, almost conversational tone that once a story is finished, you can't wait to go on to the next one. One of the stories is titled "Origin of Names Among the Cherokees." The story is about the ancient naming traditions of the Cherokees. The children were not named until they were old enough to kill a certain number of animals after which they wanted to be named. The larger or fiercer the animal, the more sought after was its name. Bear, wolf and eagle were considered very good and honorable names. The young chief, "Eg-wah Wi-yuh," who couldn't wait to have a son so that his son could go through with the naming ceremony, was saddened when his son was born blind. The young chief almost died of grief and ended up taking a journey with his guiding spirit to "The Happy Hunting Grounds." You are going to have to read this great book to learn the rest of the story, but you can imagine that the gods were not at all happy with the naming ceremony because of the killing of animals for reasons other than necessity.

This book, as with the others that Beverly and Adolf Hungry Wolf have written, is very informative and strives to send a message to the reader. The continuing main theme common to the Hungry Wolfs is that of holding on, with pride and honor, to the old ways, while graciously accepting the new ways. A second point they attempt to pass onto their readers is the overall importance of a family strengthened with solid bonds between all of the members. Beverly Hungry Wolf summed up her (and Adolf's) contributions in the quote at the beginning of this text: "Prejudice and lack of understanding among differing people and differing generations are the greatest challenges in trying to bridge my tribal culture with others. The problem exists on both sides. Through my work and writings I hope I'm contributing to a very slow improvement."



Beverly Hungry Wolf

Selected Bibliography

Works by the author

Daughters of the Buffalo Women: Maintaining the Tribal Faith (1997).

Blackfoot Craft-workers Book (1993).

Indian Tribes of the Northern Rockies (1991).

Children of the Sun: Stories by and About Indian Kids (1987).

Shadows of the Buffalo (1983).

The Ways of My Grandmothers (1980).

Siskia: A Blackfoot Legacy, with Ben Calf Robe (1979).

Works about the author

"Book Review" (*Los Angeles Times*, 1987).

"Book Review" (*New York Times*, 1980).

"Book Review" (*Publisher's Weekly*, 1986).

"Book World" (*Washington Post*, 1988).